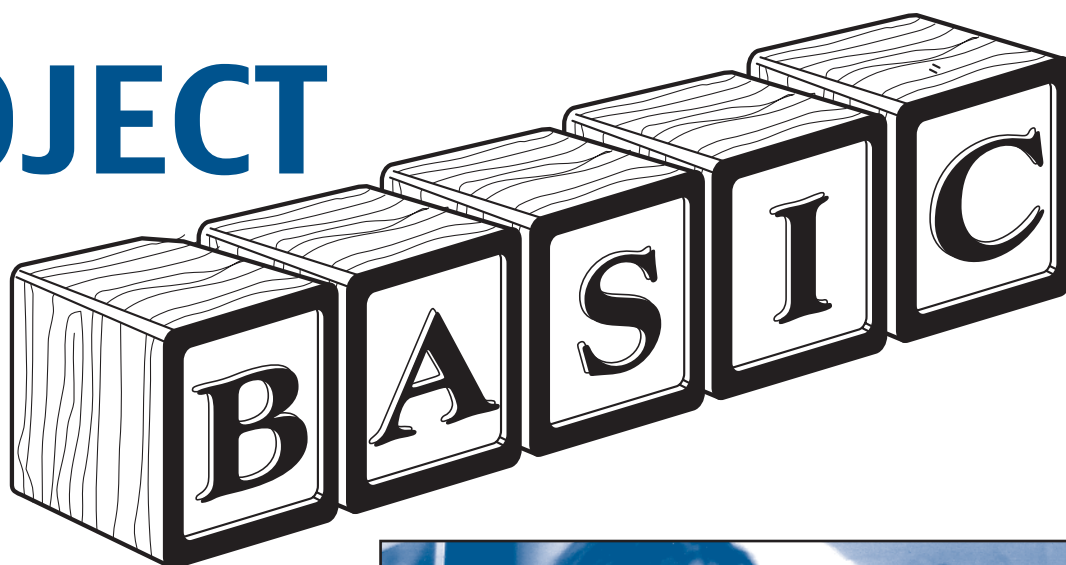


# PROJECT



**I**n a school close to where you live, a group of kindergartners are learning how to make friends. First graders are being taught about feelings and the second graders are busy practicing cooperation, mixing up a batch of Stone Soup. Just down the hall, the third grade class has been disrupted by an argument. The teacher directs the students to the peace table in a corner of her room where their conflict is soon resolved.

What's so special about these lessons, you ask? Well, they're all part of a special program for children called Better Attitudes and Skills in Children, or Project B.A.S.I.C.

The award-winning Project B.A.S.I.C. is a school-based mental health early intervention service for children in kindergarten through third grade. The goal is to reduce the incidence of mental health problems that may occur later in life.

Thirty-six specially trained child development specialists are working in 43 schools across Tennessee to help identify youngsters and their families who may have mental health needs.

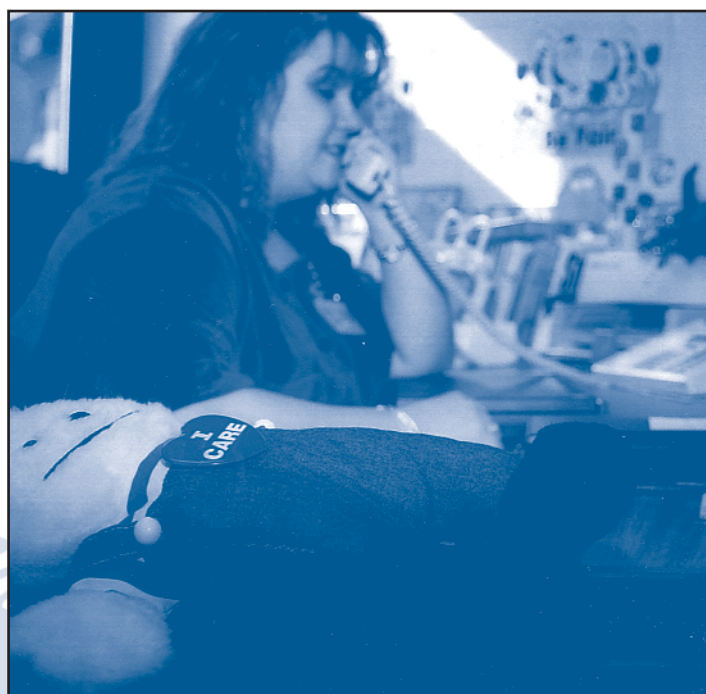
Classroom activities are intended to enhance student social skills, identify serious emotional disturbances and reduce the risk of future mental health problems.

"Last school year our focus has been on conflict resolution and anger management," Diane Oman, state coordinator explained. "We are teaching children how to get along in the world and find peaceful solutions to conflicts in their lives."

In many cases, classroom teachers identify potential problems and refer the child to B.A.S.I.C. coordinators for assessment. Project B.A.S.I.C. child development specialists conduct assessments and, where necessary with parents' permission, refer the child to a mental health agency for treatment.

The goal is to get the entire family involved in helping the child.

To participate, schools must partner with a sponsoring mental health agency. While services are focused on children



Lisa Prater, a child development specialist, has been teaching the Project B.A.S.I.C. course for the past 1.5 years. Working with 500 kids in kindergarten through third grade, Prater gets the chance to shape many a young mind. Teaching social skills and reducing the risk of future mental health problems are major areas of emphasis in the program.

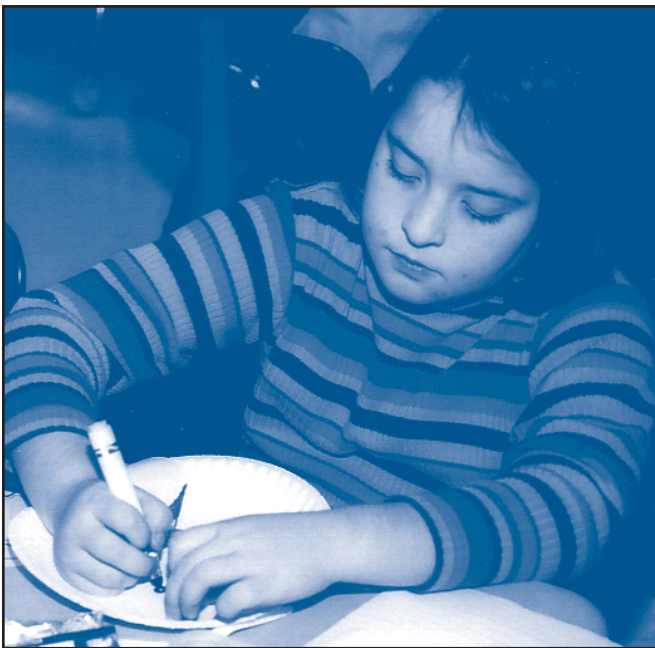
with serious emotional disturbances, services are accessible to all students, parents and teachers.

Now in its 16th year, the project serves more than 14,000 children in grades K - 3. In 2001, child development specialists identified 243 children as possibly SED (seriously emotionally disturbed).

In 1997, Project B.A.S.I.C. was awarded the Certificate of Significant Achievement by The American Psychiatric Association at its 49th Institute of Psychiatric Services in Washington, D.C.

In the fall of 2000, B.A.S.I.C. was expanded by the addition of nine new sites. By Fiscal Year 2002, five more sites were added.

# ...Helping Rural Students



Six additional sites are operating in the B.A.S.I.C. system although they are not funded by the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities.

For more information or a list of B.A.S.I.C. locations, contact Louise Barnes, Ph.D. at 615) 532-6727.



Top: Prater has this third grade class, from Hickory Creek Elementary School, making butterflies for people suffering from mental illness. The program's curriculum allows for the development of understanding that everyone has feelings and needs to be treated the same.

Above: The children wait their turn to begin the next step of the project. Each week, the different projects build on one another enhancing the students' character education.

Left: Genna Gallagher creates a butterfly using various art supplies.



# Respite to the Rescue



**M**ichael is five; his sister is four. Mom stays home to take care of the children while dad goes off to his construction job. While this may sound like a “Father Knows Best” situation, Michael is a little harder to handle than most five-year-olds.

He has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and speech problems, and his family has very limited resources. His parents are under stress because no one will stay with Michael so they can get some time off. Project AFFIRM, a planned respite program, is helping these and other such parents to get a break.

Project AFFIRM, operated by The Guidance Center in Murfreesboro, began 14 years ago. It provides planned respite services for families of children ages 2 through 17 in Williamson and Cannon counties.

Children in the program have a severe emotional disturbance or a dual diagnosis such as emotional problems and mental retardation.

The Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities funds eight planned respite programs across the state through community mental health centers. These programs operate at the following locations:

- Frayser Family Counseling Center in Memphis
- Quinco Community Mental Health Center in Jackson
- The Guidance Center of Volunteer Behavioral Health Systems in Murfreesboro
- Luton Mental Health Services of Centerstone in Nashville
- Cumberland Mt. Mental Health Services of Volunteer Behavior Healthcare Systems in Crossville and Livingston



Left: Austin Pitts plays a game of “Sorry” with Monica Floyd, a respite consultant for The Guidance Center.

Above: Cindy Hailey and Joseph Bigsby slip-slide the afternoon away.

- Ridgeview Mental Health Center in Knoxville and Oakridge
- Frontier Health in Johnson City
- Johnson Mental Health Center of Volunteer Behavior Healthcare System in Chattanooga.

Caregivers of these children need temporary relief from the constant pressures. Planned respite programs provide short-term care to support the child’s parent or custodial relative. Respite can occur in the child’s home or in a variety of out-of-home settings.

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***“When we can assist a family in obtaining respite and successfully deal with a child with severe behavioral challenges, we feel we’ve accomplished a lot.”***

**–Cindy Hailey  
Special Programs Coordinator,  
Project Affirm**

Cindy Hailey, special programs coordinator, said respite is intended to enable the family to stay together and keep the child living at home.

“We typically work with a family for six to eight weeks,” said Hailey. “We give direct respite to the family and learn about the child’s behavioral difficulties. Then we work with the family to identify a volunteer or extended family member who can be trained to care for the child using specific management techniques. We help the parents learn how to train their own respite providers in the future.”

Each family defines what they need for respite to occur. The after-school period is most stressful for Michael’s mother. So Michael’s respite consultant picks him up after school one day each week.

The consultant may take him to the park or shopping mall, bake cookies together or provide some other appropriate activity. He also helps him with his behavioral problems.

Project AFFIRM operates on a flexible schedule with night and weekend respite. The peak time for staff members is after school. Referrals to Project AFFIRM come from therapists, counselors, schools or parents.

“We serve 50-60 children each year and usually have five or six referrals waiting,” said Hailey. “We try not to keep the families waiting any longer than necessary.”

Once the family is trained and has a respite provider in place, Project AFFIRM makes follow-up calls throughout the year to ensure that the family has continuing respite provider support.

“When we can assist a family in obtaining respite and successfully deal with a child with severe behavioral challenges, we feel we’ve accomplished a lot,” said Hailey.

*For further information on planned respite programs, contact Louise Barnes, Ph.D. at (615) 532-6727.*



Top: Outings to the park is but one of the many ways respite workers spend time with the children they help.

Bottom: Pitts swings into action at the playground.